

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claim 8 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter.

Please amend the claims as follows:

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1. (Amended) An assembly for supporting a mixer shaft in an opening in a vessel wall, the assembly comprising:
(adapted to be) or (mountable)
a support mounted around the opening;
a sealing assembly^{adapt. mountable} mounted at an axial location relative to the mixer shaft, the sealing assembly having a rotating seal element that surrounds the mixer shaft and is positioned between^{comb}
a first stationary sealing ring and a second stationary sealing ring;
a first bearing mounted to the support that surrounds and supports the mixer shaft at a first axial location thereof; and
a second bearing mounted to the support that surrounds and supports the mixer shaft at a second axial location thereof.

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6. (Amended) An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the support comprises a first support portion that supports the sealing assembly and a second support portion that supports the first and second bearings.

7. (Amended) An assembly according to claim 6, wherein the first support portion comprises a housing attached to a base that supports the first and second bearings.

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11. (Amended) An assembly for supporting a mixer shaft in an opening in a vessel wall, the assembly comprising:

supporting means mounted around the opening;

sealing means supported by the supporting means that engages a circumference of the mixer shaft with sealing contact, said sealing means having a rotating seal means that surrounds the mixer shaft and is positioned between a first stationary sealing means and a second stationary sealing means;

first bearing means supported by supporting means that surrounds and supports the mixer shaft at one axial location thereof; and

second bearing means supported by the supporting means that surrounds and supports the mixer shaft at a second axial location thereof.

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13. (Amended) An assembly according to claim 12, wherein the first tapered roller bearing is canted at a first angle relative to an axis of the mixer shaft and the second tapered roller bearing is canted at a second angle relative to the axis of the mixer shaft.

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16. (Amended) An assembly according to claim 11, wherein the supporting means comprises a first support portion that supports the sealing assembly and a second support portion that supports the first and second bearing means.

17. (Amended) An assembly according to claim 16, wherein the first support portion comprises a base that is attachable to the vessel wall.

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19. (Amended) An assembly according to claim 11, further comprising an inner bearing housing that surrounds a portion of the shaft and is mounted to the first and second bearing means.

20. (Amended) An assembly according to claim 11, wherein the supporting means, the sealing means, and the bearing means form a removable cartridge.

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21. (Amended) A method for supporting a mixer shaft in an opening in a vessel wall, comprising the steps of:

sealing around the circumference of the mixer shaft at a first location of the mixer shaft to prevent material from escaping the vessel around the shaft using a rotating seal element that surrounds the mixer shaft and is positioned between a first stationary sealing ring and a second stationary sealing ring; and

supporting the mixer shaft at least second and third locations along the length of the mixer shaft to resist axial, radial, and bending loads on the shaft at the second and third locations.

Please add the following claims:

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23. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the first stationary sealing ring contacts the rotating seal element to retain bearing lubricating material.

24. An assembly according to claim 1, wherein the second stationary sealing ring contacts the rotating seal to prevent material from escaping from the vessel.

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25. An assembly for supporting a mixer shaft in an opening in a vessel wall, the assembly comprising:

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a support mounted around an opening;
a sealing assembly mounted at an axial location relative to the mixer shaft, the sealing assembly comprising a rotating seal element that surrounds the mixer shaft and is held between two sealing rings;

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a first tapered bearing mounted to the support that surrounds and supports the mixer shaft at one axial location thereof; and

a second tapered bearing mounted to the support that surrounds and supports the mixer shaft at a second axial location thereof,

wherein the first and second tapered bearings counteract radial and axial bending loads.

26. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein said sealing assembly is removable.

27. An assembly according to claim 25, wherein said first tapered bearing is removable and said second tapered bearing is removable.

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28. An assembly for supporting a mixer shaft in an opening in a vessel wall, the assembly comprising:

a support mounted around an opening; and
a removable cartridge mounted to said support, said removable cartridge having a sealing assembly mounted at an axial location relative to the mixer shaft and a bearing assembly mounted to the support that surrounds and supports the mixer shaft.

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29. An assembly according to claim 28, wherein said sealing assembly comprises a rotating seal element that surrounds the mixer shaft and is held between two stationary sealing rings.

30. An assembly according to claim 28, wherein said bearing assembly comprises a first tapered bearing mounted to the support that surrounds and supports the mixer shaft at one axial location thereof and a second tapered bearing mounted to the support that surrounds and supports the mixer shaft at a second axial location thereof.
